



Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) questioned government health care officials today about the impact of Medicare physician fee cuts and called for changes to preserve elderly patient access to health care.

The 13th District Congressman expressed concerns brought to his attention by Drs. Michael Patete, President of the Sarasota County Medical Society and Manny Rodriguez, past President of Manatee County medical society during this morning's Small Business Committee hearing to examine challenges faced by small medical practices.

"Doctors in my District are telling me the pending cuts in reimbursement rates could result in a situation where small practices refuse to take Medicare patients," said Buchanan to Deputy Administrator of Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Herb Kuhn. "I have the largest percentage in the nation of seniors over 65 in my District. These cuts could have a serious impact on their ability to see a Doctor and receive treatment."

Buchanan noted that in the City of Venice doctors have practices where 80 to 95 percent of their practice is Medicare patients.

“I don’t believe it was ever envisioned that doctors would have such a high percentage of Medicare patients,” said Buchanan. “How do you expect doctors to handle such a dramatic cut when almost all their patients are served by Medicare?”

The Congressman also expressed concern to Medicare about the ability to recruit physicians to treat Medicare patients.

“We need to address the Medicare reimbursement issue for our doctors and our seniors who depend on Medicare for their health care coverage,” said Buchanan. “The current Medicare physician payment system is broken. It needs to be replaced.”

Buchanan has long been an opponent of deep Medicare cuts to doctors. Earlier this year, Buchanan signed a letter to the Leadership of the House of Representatives urging action on this issue before Congress adjourns this year.

“Doctors may be forced with the tough decision to stop serving Medicare beneficiaries. We can not let this happen,” Buchanan said.